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*A Dramatic Cast
Reading Arrangement*

SHAKESPEARE'S

**A Midsummer-
Night's Dream**



EMMA SHERIDAN FRY

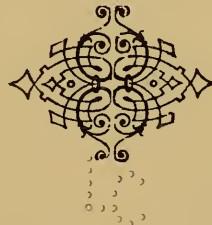


A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

BY
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

ARRANGED IN 1915 FOR
DRAMATIC CAST-READING

BY
EMMA SHERIDAN FRY
THE FOUNDER OF THE SCIENCE OF EDUCATIONAL DRAMATICS



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PREPARATION

The teacher should be familiar with the whole play, and in the light of that knowledge should conduct an analysis of story and characters as here presented. "Round readings" should follow, and Characterization be developed according to the Educational Player Method. Expressive impulse should find relief through speech channels, and the body remain at ease. A study of "Educational Dramatics" by the author of this arrangement is recommended.

The blank pages facilitate pasting pages into production book and allow space for notes.

DIRECTIONS

THIS arrangement may be presented by a single reader, or by a Story-reader, and a group of Cast-readers, each Cast-reader assigned to the reading of a single character. The pretty tumult of the fairies should be made by all the Cast-readers, blending their voices in sounds of "coo—coo—oo—oo and zum—zum—zum. Puck's laugh, named so often in the text, should be a long sweet call, which breaks and ripples into eerie laughter. When a single reader presents the whole play she will make such slight changes in the text, as may be required to accomplish an unbroken continuity of effect; nor will, in any case the name of the character speaking be announced, except when continuity demands.

Here and there in this printing, lines occur in brackets, such, convey some hint as to pause, or music, and may be read, or acted upon in the judgment of the reader.

An arrangement of Mendelssohn's music may be used adding happily to the beauty and dramatic value of this entertainment.

When presentation is made by Story-reader, and Cast, the Cast-readers may retain their usual class room seats, a Teacher, or one of the class, standing to read the story-text, each Cast character speaking as the text indicates. Each of the Cast gives complete speech-expression to the character for whom he reads and such speaking, together with the story-text, unfolds the play to the imagination of all.

For more formal occasion the Cast-readers, costumed all alike, in flowing robes, and scarf about the head and neck, may be seated in semicircles, double or triple, the Story-reader standing near the end of the first row.

Music and a stately ceremony of entrance and departure may add to the beauty and dignity of the presentation.

Cast-readers and Story-reader are assembled. Horns sound, summoning all to attention. The Story-reader speaks.

The Story-reader.

Surrender now your sober way
And listen to Will Shakespeare's play.
Fairies and Court Folk you shall see.
Magic before your eyes shall be.
An Ass goes on two feet instead of four;
True love is lost and is found once more.
Weddings, rehearsals and runnings away,
All are part of this pass-time play.
Welcome these fancies,
Take them for true;
Dance in the dances;
Much good shall accrue.

Sunshine in Athens, long ago,—in the time of never-mind-when. Sunshine at last, after days of prodigious rain and fog, swollen rivers, and ill-seasoned cold. Sunshine now everywhere, golden and gracious. It gilds the stately street that passes the Duke's Palace. Beyond the steps and terracing you can see the green tops of the Duke's garden swinging against the sapphire sky. From afar, the forest finds its way into this garden and tames itself to formal luxury to please the Court.

Orange curtains hang close against the pillars of the upper resting places. Sometimes these curtains are spread to hide Court doings, but now you can see beyond them to the bronze doors of the Palace.

All the air is shaken with shrill, sweet sounds, bird-call andplash of water, tinkling music and soft laughter. In his garden Theseus entertains the Amazonian Queen Hippolyta, whom lately his sword conquered only to make mistress of his heart.

Simple folk may woo in cloistered peace, but royal hearts must make their love a pageantry.

A flare of trumpets, and up from the garden comes the scarlet and purple splendor of the Court: Harken, for Theseus speaks.

Theseus. Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace; four happy days bring
In another moon: but O, methinks, how
Slow this old moon wanes! She lingers
My desires . . . Go, Philostrate!
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriment.—
Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword, but
I will wed thee in another key,—with pomp,
With triumph, and with revelrie!

Hippolyta. Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time.

They are about to pass into the Palace, when Egeus, his white head shaken with anger, dragging his pretty daughter, Hermia, along the street by a captive wrist, and followed by two young nobles, Lysander and Demetrius, salutes Theseus, and promptly unfolds his grievance:

Egeus. Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.—
Stand forth, Demetrius.—My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.—
Stand forth, Lysander.—And my gracious Duke,
This man hath witched the bosom of my child.
Thou, thou, Lysander,
With cunning hast thou filched my daughter's heart,
Turned her obedience, which is due to me,
To stubborn harshness.—And, my gracious Duke,
Be it so she will not here before your grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,—
As she is mine, I may dispose of her.

- Theseus.* What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair maid.
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.
- Hermia.* So is Lysander.
- Theseus.* The other must be held the worthier.
- Hermia.* I would my father looked but with my eyes.
I do entreat your grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case,
If I refuse to wed Demetrius?

And when gravely and kindly he bids her:

- Theseus.* Know of your youth,
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
You can endure the livery of a nun.

She runs to the ready arms of Lysander, crying:

- Hermia.* So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord.

What news for Demetrius!

- Demetrius.* Relent, sweet Hermia! And, Lysander, yield
Thy crazed title to my certain right!

- Lysander.* You have her father's love, Demetrius,
Let me have Hermia's. Do you marry him!

- Egeus.* Scornful Lysander!
She is mine and all my right of her,
I do estate unto Demetrius.

Lysander makes manly plea to Theseus. Perhaps the stormy silence of Hermia,—so little, so pretty, so determined,—appeals more loud. Perhaps the heart of Theseus is gentle because his own splendid love stands beside him. At any rate he bids Hermia:—

- Theseus.* Take time to pause. And, by the next new moon,—
The sealing-day betwixt my love and me
For ever-lasting bond of fellowship,—

Upon that day, either prepare
To wed Demetrius, as your father wills,
Or on Diana's altar to protest
Austerity and single life.

Then he summons them all to conference in the Palace. Perhaps he smiles an understanding to Hippolyta, who lingers to speak to Hermia. Perhaps the Amazon Queen is tender of heart because her splendid love is near. Somehow it happens that she and the Court follow Theseus, and Hermia and Lysander are left for a precious instant together. See her, like any love-lorn lass of now to-day, crumple up on the great steps there by Athens' street; Hark to him, like any stout-heart lover of these or any times:—

Lysander. Hear me, Hermia! I have a widow aunt;
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues,
And she respects me as her only son.
There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee.
And to that place the sharp Athenian law
Cannot pursue us. If thou lov'st me then,
Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night
And in the wood, a league without the town,
There will I stay for thee.

Who can guess her answer.—What would yours be!

Hermia. My good Lysander, I swear by Cupid's strongest bow
In that same place thou hast appointed me,
To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

A snatched embrace,—almost discovered by a comer through the street! Stately fair Helena, Hermia's school friend, who goes veiled, and weeping because Demetrius, once her suitor vowed, now adores Hermia's beauty. The lovers bubble their happiness to her.

Hermia. Take comfort! He no more shall see my face!
Lysander and myself shall fly this place.
And in the wood, where often you and I
Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie,
Emptying our bosoms of their counsels sweet,
There my Lysander and myself shall meet;
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes.
Farewell, sweet play-fellow! Pray thou for us,
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!

Away the two hasten, Hermia all belated, to join her father, and Lysander to prepare for departure. But poor Helena is not comforted.

Helena. How happy some, o'er other some can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she,
But what of that! Demetrius thinks not so.
Yet ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eyne,
He hailed down oaths that he was only mine.

O, then comes a scheme into her foolish blond head:

I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight,
Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
Pursue her. But herein do I enrich my pain,
Him will I follow, thither and back again.

As Helena hurries away, she passes a group of Athens workmen, who stand aside respectfully. These are a Tailor, Starveling by name,—and Francis Flute, a Bellows-mender,—and a Joiner, Snug. Their eager talk is of their friend, Peter Quince, a well-known Carpenter of Athens, by whom they are summoned. Behold, here he comes! and with him, the great Nick Bottom, a Weaver by trade, but a wonderful man in a stage-play. Along with them, trots the Tinker, Snout, with his arms full of scrolls, for a play is a'foot, a play to compete for a prize at the Wedding Festival of Theseus.

Quince. Is all our company here!

Bottom did not plan this enterprise, but now that he is in it, he knows how it should be conducted.

Bottom. You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the script.

Quince. Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit through all Athens to play in our interlude, before the Duke and the Duchess on his wedding day, at night.

Bottom. First good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point.

Quince. Marry, our play is, The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe.

Bottom. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll.

Quince. You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

Bottom. My chief humor is for a Tyrant. I could play Ercles rarely!

“ The raging rocks,
And shivering shocks,
Shall break the locks
 Of prison gates.
And Phibus' car
Shall shine from far,
And make and mar
 The foolish fates.”

This was lofty!—Now name the rest of the Players.

Quince. Francis Flute the Bellows-mender, you must take Thisbe on you.

Flute. Nay faith, let me not play a woman. I have a beard coming.

Quince. You shall play it in a mask.

Bottom. And I may hide my face, let me play Thisbe too; I'll speak in a monstrous little voice,—“Thisne, Thisne!”—“Ah, Pyramus, my lover dear, thy Thisne dear, and lady dear!”

Quince. No, no, you must play Pyramus.

Bottom. Well, proceed.

Quince. Snug the Joiner, you the Lion's part.

Snug. Have you the Lion's part written? Pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

Quince. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

Bottom. Let me play the Lion too. I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me. I will roar that I will make the Duke say,—“Let him roar again, let him roar again.”

Quince. You can play no part but Pyramus.

Bottom has borne all that the artistic temperament of an amateur actor may. He slams down his scroll, and begins a majestic departure. It takes the whole company to calm him down. Great the relief when he yields.

Bottom. Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best play it in?

At last all is settled.

Quince. And I hope here is a play fitted. Masters, here are your parts, con them by tomorrow night, and meet me in the Palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight. There will we rehearse. I pray you fail me not.

Bottom. We will meet, and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously.

So they disperse, already conning their parts. And, tomorrow night, will set forth to the wood, Lysander and his love, the little

Hermia, and, if Helena's heart reads right, Demetrius will pursue with Helena at his heels. And, as we have just heard, tomorrow night, there in that same forest that finds its way from the gardens of the Duke, Quince and his Pyramus and Thisbe Company will gather to rehearse. Let us take our way there, too.

Tomorrow night is come. Here we are, before the others!

Dusky dark!

(*Fairy Music, very softly*)

Tremble of fairy music. The moon dapples grey and green. Something whirls by! Or is it a flutter of moonshine!

(*Puck's long low laugh croons woo . . . oo! oo! oo!*)

The moonlight brightens.

See! See!! Puck himself, a scarlet splash a'top of a mushroom! and the silver mist swirling by him is,—oh, think of it—swarm on swarm of crooning, gossiping Fairies! Gleaming gossamer, tinkling, passing.—Up he reaches and nips one by the bright wings,—

/ *Puck.* How now, spirit! Whither wander you?

/ *Fairy.* Over hill, over dale,

Through brush, through brier,
Over park, over pale,
Through flood, through fire,
And I serve the Fairy Queen,
And do her dances on the green.

Puck. The King doth do his revels here tonight,

Take heed the Queen comes not within his sight.

(*The zum-zum and the coo-oo of fairies and elves sounds!*)

Room now, fairy! here comes Oberon!

Fairy. And here my mistress, would that he were gone!

Straight up in the air flies the fairy.

Back, head over heels, behind the mushroom, tumbles Puck, and just in time, for

(*Zum-zum . . . coo-oo*)

Oberon himself, at the head of his elves, faces his tempestuous Queen, and all her fairies.

Oberon. Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania!

Titania. What, jealous Oberon! Art thou here indeed!

Never met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,

By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,

Or in the beached margin of the sea,

To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,

But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.

Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,

As in revenge have sucked up from the sea

Contagious fogs. Therefore the moon

The governess of floods, pale in her anger,

Washes all the air.

The fold stands empty in the drowned field.

And this from our dissension. So do you yield.

Oberon. Do you amend it!

And now we know

Wherfore this many a day

The rain from Athens

Would not keep away.

When fairies quarrel, skies are sulky too,

When fairies quarrel, what shall mortals do?

Titania. Amend it!

Nay, do *you*!

Within this wood perchance, I stay

Till after Theseus' wedding day.

Now patiently dance in our round,

Or in my presence be not found.

Oberon. Give thy allegiance and with thee I'll stay.

Titania. Not for thy Kingdom, Fairies, away!

After the flutter of fairies the valiant Elves charge.

Hear their routing!

(*Puck's long, low, crooning laugh*)

In ecstasy of mirth Puck rolls out from under the mushroom, right over

The fairy king's angry toes

Such a beating he gets!

How he howls at the blows!

And now in a trice he is sent on the run

To the rim of the world, out over the sun,

To fetch the flower called love-in-idleness

That magic from it Oberon may press.

Oberon. I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes,
The next thing then she waking spies,
With soul of love she shall pursue,
And e'er I take this charm off from her sight,
As with another magic I can do,
She shall be gentle to my right.
Fetch me this herb.

Puck. I'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes!

Up! up! he skims!

Up! up! like a bird!

To the top of the skies.

Where the winds herd

And storm is unfurled.

A flickering speck he flies
Across the moon where she swims,
Away to the rim of the world
Where the magical flower lies!
So he is gone.

(*Voices. Helena and Demetrius*)

What sound breaks in on all this fairy world! Mortals!—And are there mortals?—Oberon, startled as are we, becomes invisible, and from that safety, watches.—Behold! Demetrius whom Helena pursues.

Demetrius. Where is Lysander, and where Hermia?
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more!

Sure some magic is on Demetrius that he can thus ungently chide the maid.

Helena. You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant.
Demetrius. Do I not in plainest truth
Tell you I do not, nor I cannot love you!
Helena. And even for that do I love you the more.
Demetrius. I'll leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts!
Helena. The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
We cannot fight for love, as men may do,
We should be wooed, and were not made to woo.

Weeping bitterly, she still pursues him who seeks Hermia. The heart of the Fairy King is moved, and then there grows

A speck on the moon
And then down, down
Comes soon
Puck and the flower,

Oberon bids him,—

Oberon. Seek through this groove.
A sweet Athenian lady is in love
With a disdainful youth: Anoint his eyes,
And do it when the next thing he espies
May be the lady.

So shall Demetrius be brought to dote again on Helena, whom he now chides. Away goes Puck, part of the magic branch in his elfish fist. Meanwhile, Oberon seeks

That bank whereon the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows
Quite over-canopied with lush woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine,
Where sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight.
With magic juice he there will streak her eyes
And make her full of hateful fantasies.

And all this time, what of Lysander and his dear true love? They should by now be far upon their way towards that kind Aunt whose home shall give them safety. Even now they come! Alas, how weakly! Trustfully she droops within his sturdy arm, her hood slipped from her dark head, her little feet lagging.

Lysander. Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood;
And, to speak troth, I have forgot our way:
We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
And tarry for the comfort of the day.

Hermia. Be it so, Lysander: find you out a bed;
For I upon this bank will rest my head.

Lysander. One turf shall serve as pillow for us both,
One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth.

Hermia. Nay, good Lysander, for my sake my dear
Lie further off,—yet. Do not lie so near.

Lysander. My heart unto your heart is knit,
So that but one heart can we make of it;
Two bosoms, interchained with an oath;
Two bosoms, and a single troth.

Then by your side, oh, do not room deny.

Hermia. Gentle friend, for love and courtesy,
Lie further off; in modesty
Such separation as may well be said
Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,
So far be distant; and, good night, sweet friend.
Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end!

He salutes her hand, and seeks his couch, oh, many steps away.

Lysander. End life when I end loyalty!
Here is my bed: sleep give thee all his rest!

Even as he says it, he is asleep, and Hermia too.—And the night-shadows cloak them where they lie.

(*Puck's long laugh croons*)

Puck Through the forest have I gone,
But Athenian found I none.
Night and silence! Who is here?
Weeds of Athens he doth wear.
And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
On the dank and dirty ground.
Pretty soul! She durst not lie
Near this lack-love, kill-courtesy!
Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
All the power this charm doth owe.

So into the eyes of Lysander, Puck, who was sent to find Demetrius, squeezes the magic juice. And no sooner is he gone to report his obedience to Oberon, than in runs Helena, from whom Demetrius still flees.

- Helena.* Oh, wilt thou darkling leave me! Do not so!
Demetrius. Stay on thy peril! I alone will go.
Helena. Oh, I am out of breath in this fond chase.
The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.
Lysander on the ground!
Lysander! If you live, good sir, awake.

So soon as his enchanted eyes open upon her, he proclaims his new infatuation.

- Lysander.* Let me through fire run for thy sweet sake!
Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!
Helena. Do not say so, Lysander, say not so!
What though he love your Hermia! Lord, what
though?
Yet Hermia still loves you. Then be content.
Lysander. Content with Hermia!
Not Hermia, but Helena now I love.
Helena. Oh, that a lady of one man refused
Should of another therefore be abused.

Away she hastens, Lysander pell-mell after her. Hermia stirs from sleep. Does her endangered heart arouse her?

- Hermia.* Lysander!

Only silence answers.—And behold! his mossy couch is empty!

Hermia. What, removed? Lysander! speak, an if you hear;
Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.
No. You are not nigh:
You will I find, or may I die!

Her frantic clamor hushes among the trees. All is still again.
And dark.—and still more dark. Sh . . . sh . . .

(*Soft fairy music*)

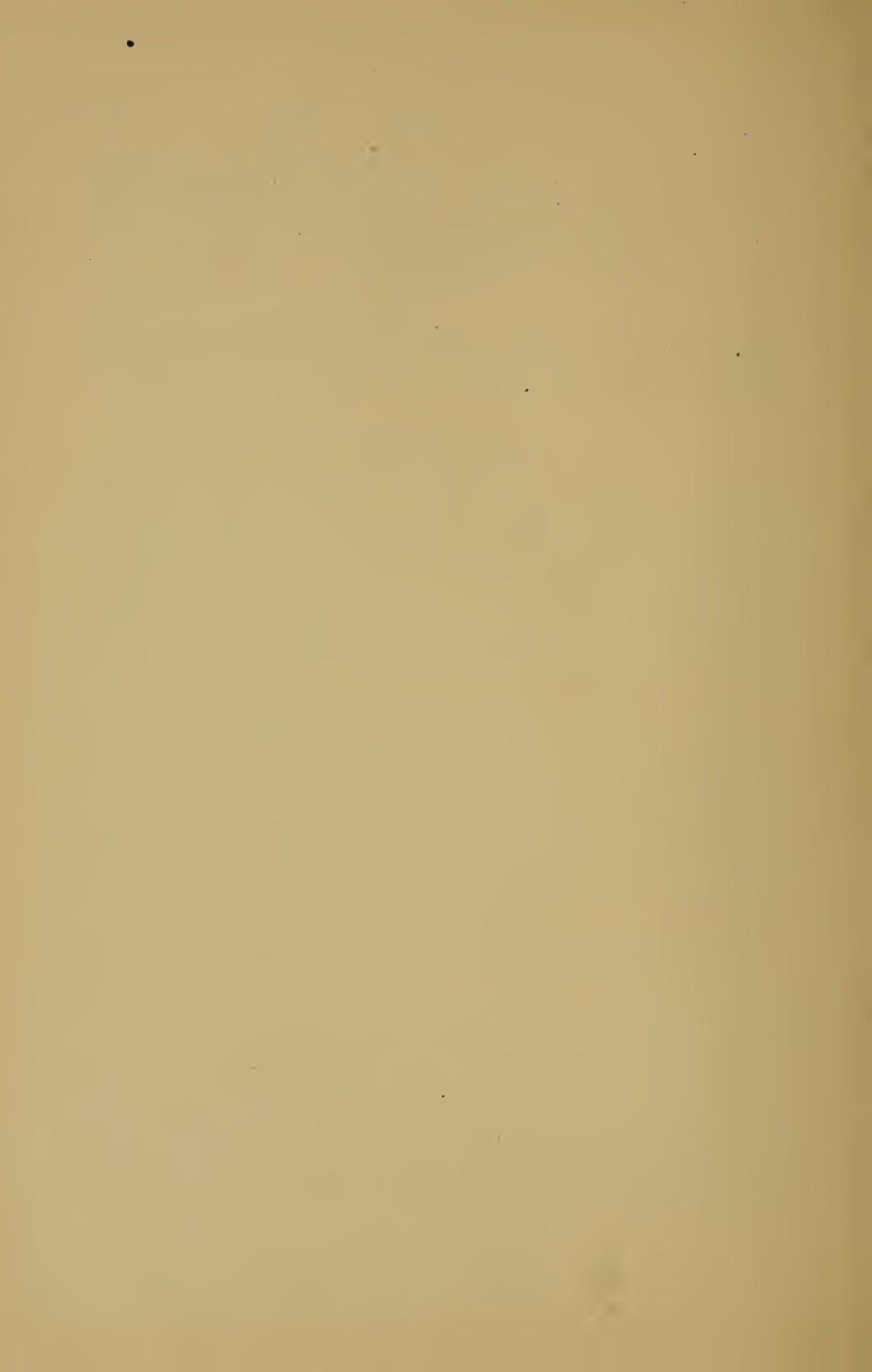
The moon dapples grey and green. Flutter of shadow, and of little figures mingle,—sh . . . Breathe not lest you fright the fairies from Titania's bower. Now the place is drenched in silver. All the air is a'tinkle . . . Titania comes, the fairies flickering about her. And oh, but the place smells sweet as with showering rose leaves, and glimmers like running water.

Titania. Come now, a roundel and a fairy song.

Linked hands and fluttering wings,—feet scarce on the ground, —tresses a'stream, and garments whipping in wide curves of spinning flight. Ah!—just as you dreamed it!—just as you knew it,—here it is. Frolic and fantasy, moonlight and shadow, brooding forest, and fairies a'swarm.

Titania. Sing me now to sleep,

So in her bower she reclines
Rid of her royal robes of purple lily bloom,
Wrapt in lace of cobweb spun,
Her bright hair loosed of its crown,
Her little feet slipped into roseleaf shoon,
Over her cuddled a corn-floss quilt
Her pillow soft with bluebirds' down.



Fairies. Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby.
Lulla, lulla, lullaby. Lulla, lulla, lullaby.
Never harm,
Nor spell nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So, good night, with lullaby.

She sleeps, she sleeps. Curtain of columbine, fern frond, and
eglantine drawn close.

Fairy. Hence! Away now all is well!
One alone stand Sentinel.

They drift away,
Shadows fall.
Is it the Sentinel there
With a fleur-de-lis tall
For his halberd?
Or is it a flower that grows?
Or a slant of the moon as it goes?
Who can tell!

And see! all this time Oberon has stood concealed in the hawthorn
brake. Away hurries the Sentinel elf at his nod.
Softly Oberon pushes back the curtain of columbine bloom, and
brushes her folded eyes with love's flower!

Oberon. What thou seest when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy true-love take.
Love and languish for his sake.
Wake to see a monster near,
In thine eye it shall appear
When thou wakest it is thy dear.

Softly the columbine curtains fall,
Oberon slips away.
In all the shadowed place
There is no trace
Of Fairy play;
Not any trace at all of magic doing,
Or any sound.
And is she there,
The Queen? And where
In all the forest shall be found
A Monster for her wooing?
Hush! Silence keep!
She is asleep.

(*Very soft music lulls a moment, then slips into silence*)

(*Sounds now the lusty medley and confusion of the Pyramus and Thisbe Company*)

What a tumult!

Welcome to the Pyramus and Thisbe Company, and here they come tumbling into the place just so lately smoothed for Titania's dancing. Snug, Bottom, Flute, Starveling, Snout and Stage Manager Quince.

Quince. And here's a marvelous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage. This hawthorn brake our tiring house. And we will do it in action as we will do it before the Duke.

Bottom. Peter Quince, there are things in this comedy of "Pyramus and Thisbe" that will never please.

Snout. Will not the ladies be afeared of the lion?

Starveling. I fear it, I promise you.

Bottom. Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves. To bring in, God shield us!—a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing, for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living. And we ought to look to it.

Snout. Therefore a prologue must tell he is not a lion.

Bottom. Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck. And he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect,—“Ladies,” or, “Fair ladies,—I would wish you”—or, “I would request you”—or “I would entreat you—not to fear, not to tremble, my life for yours. If you think I came hither as a lion, it were pity of my life: no. I am no such thing, I am a man as other men are:”—and there, indeed, let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug, the Joiner.

Quince. Well, it shall be so.

Flute. But there is two hard things.—That is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber. For you know, Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight.

Bottom. Why then, you may leave a casement of the great chamber-window where we play, open, and the moon may shine in at the casement.

Quince. Ay.

Snout. Or else, one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern and say he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of Moonshine.

Starveling. Then there is another thing, we must have a wall in the great chamber, for Pyramus and Thisbe, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

Snug. You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom?

Bottom. Some man or other must present Wall. And let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify Wall. And let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisbe whisper.

Quince. If that may be, then all is well. Come, rehearse your parts! Pyramus, you begin. When you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake—and so everyone, according to his cue.

Out from the bushes pops Puck.

Puck. What hempen home-spuns have we swaggering here,
So near the cradle of the Fairy Queen?
A play toward! I'll be an auditor.

He curls up on his mushroom, though he should be seeking a Monster for the Queen's waking.

Quince. Speak, Pyramus,—Thisbe, stand forth!
Bottom. "Thisbe, the flowers of odious savours sweet."
Quince. "Odours, odours."
Bottom. "Odours, savours sweet—
So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe, dear.
But hark a voice! Stay thou awhile but here,
And by and by I will to thee appear."

Nobly Bottom struts to the hawthorn brake, and Puck rocking with delight follows to work on him a magic mischief.

Flute. Must I speak now?
Quince. Ay marry, must you. For you must understand he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

Flute. "Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,
Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier
Most briskly juvenile, and eke most lovely you,
As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire,
I'll meet thee Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb."

Quince. "Ninus' tomb" man. Why, you must not speak that yet, that you answer to Pyramus. You speak all your part at once, cues and all. Pyramus enter! your cue is past. It is "Never tire."

Flute. Oh!—"As true as truest horse, that yet would *never tire*."

No wonder Pyramus is late. See what Puck has done,—a great Ass-head is on Bottom's shoulders, he knows it not. It feels as natural as his own. Out he strides, roaring his line,

Bottom. "If I were fair, Thisbe, I were only thine,"

His Thisbe leaps into the air.

Quince, manuscript and all, goes over backward with a howl. Snug, Snout and Starveling interlock, bleating their terror.

All. Oh, monstrous! Oh, strange! we are haunted.—
Pray, masters!—Fly, masters—Help!

Among them the Ass-head, Bottom, stands amazed. Puck's shrill cries reenforce the clamour, he dashes invisibly among them, tripping and driving and lashing.

Snout. O Bottom! Thou art changed. What do I see on thee?

Bottom. What do you see? You see an Ass-head of your own, do you?

Quince. Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou art translated!

Puck. I'll follow you, I'll lead you 'bout around,
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through
brier.

Away they plunge toward Athens.

Bottom. Why do they run away? This a knavery of them
to make me afeared.

The sudden blank silence terrifies him.

Bottom. This is to make an Ass of me. To fright me, if they
could. But I will not stir from this place, do what
they can. I will walk up and down here, and I will
sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid.

Loud and strong he brays, marching to and fro.
Titania there, behind her close-drawn greenery stirs, and wakens,
and wonders.

Bottom. The ousel-cock, so black of hue,
With orange tawny bill,—

She peeps out. Her eyes laden with the magic of Love's Flower,
rest upon the translated Bottom. All falls out as Oberon ordered,
and as Puck has planned.

Titania. What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

Bottom. The finch, the sparrow and the lark,
The plain-song cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer nay—ay! n...n...a...a a!!!

Down she steps before him.

Titania. I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:
Mine ear is much enamoured of thy note;
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
So do thy virtues move me,
On the first view to say,
To swear I love thee!

Bottom. Bl,—laa—a—ug—gru—oo—oo—blu—bluggg goo!!

Titania. Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

Bottom. Not so neither.—But if I had wit enough to get out
of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

With long strides, his arms out-clutching towards home, he breaks
for the woods. Forth lashes the wilful Titania's swift fury.

Titania. Out of this wood do not desire to go.
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate
The summer still doth tend upon my state,
And I do love thee! Therefore go with me,
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee.
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep.
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so,
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.
Peaseblossom! Cobweb!—Moth and Mustard-seed!

Fairies. Ready!

And I!

And I! and I!

Where shall we go?

Titania. Be kind, and courteous to this gentleman.

(*Medley of fairy sound supports her words*)

Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes.
Feed him with apricots, and dew berries.
Nod to him, Elves, and do him courtesies.

Fairies. Hail Mortal!

Hail!

Hail!

Hail!

Behold the wits of Nicholas Bottom the Weaver stagger under that new Ass-top of his.

How he makes shift to answer all these courtesies.

How he bows and scrapes,—his great ears wagging, his breath coming in heaves of anguish,—How he strives to “like an airy spirit go.”

Hark to his small-talk and politeness,—one eye towards Athens.

Bottom. Your name, honest gentleman.

(*A medley of fairy sounds is about him always*)

I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother—Good Master Mustard-seed, I know you well, I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb!

Titania. Come, wait upon him. Lead him to my bower.

But when they swarm about him like gnats of a summer day, when trails of columbine and cedar-vine enmesh him, and his ears are full of fluttering and light laughter,—oh, then the beleagured soul of Nick Bottom, the Weaver, who just lately was Pyramus, breaks forth into a wild blare of terror.

Even Titania scurries to cover. Then imperious, she bids,

Titania. Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently.

They swoop down upon him.

He dares not breathe for fear of choking with them.

Round and round his great Ass-nose, they bind their garlands.

Foot and wrist he is lassoed. All is over. Bottom is no more. He is indeed translated. Stepping high, leashed to Titania's dainty hand, a rose-wreath hanging from one fatuous ear, and fairies swarming about him, so he is led away to Titania's waking bower! Bottom, Bottom, who was Pyramus just now,—Ass-topped and vassal to a fairy queen!

Meantime Puck, having lashed the lamenting remnant of the Pyramus and Thisbe Company well along towards Athens, has hastened to tell Oberon of his success.

Puck. An Ass's nowl I fixed on his head.
And left sweet Pyramus translated there,
When in that moment—so it came to pass—
Titania waked, and straightway loved an Ass.

So far, so good. But what of Puck's other commission? Sent to anoint the eyes of Demetrius, and so unite him to Helena, he bewitched Lysander instead. Her love he should have restored to Helena, but instead, he robbed Hermia of hers. Even now Hermia's Lysander roams through the wood at the heels of Helena, while Demetrius still pursues the unwilling Hermia. Now comes Hermia, out of breath with scolding the undesired Demetrius, who tags disconsolate, at her swift heels. Oberon sees and hears it all. What a beating Puck gets! And when wearied, and confused, Demetrius throws himself to rest, Oberon undertakes his rescue.

Oberon. About the wood go swifter than the wind,
And Helena of Athens, look thou find!
All fancy-sick she is, and pale of cheer.
By some illusion see thou bring her here.
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

Puck. I go, I go.—look how I go,—
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow.

Away he flies,
Then to Demetrius' sleeping eyes
Kind Oberon the juice applies.
So when fair Helen comes within his view,
He may awake to render her love's due.
Already Puck returns.

Puck. Helena is here at hand,
 And the youth mistook by me,
 Shall we their fond pageant see,—
 Lord, what fools these mortals be!

Helena. These vows are Hermia's, do you give her o'er?

Helena's protest is cut short by Demetrius himself, and Oberon, safely invisible, sees his good offices turned to confusion,—for when Demetrius hops from his sleep, and beholding Helena, straightway shouts his allegiance, poor Helena takes little joy.

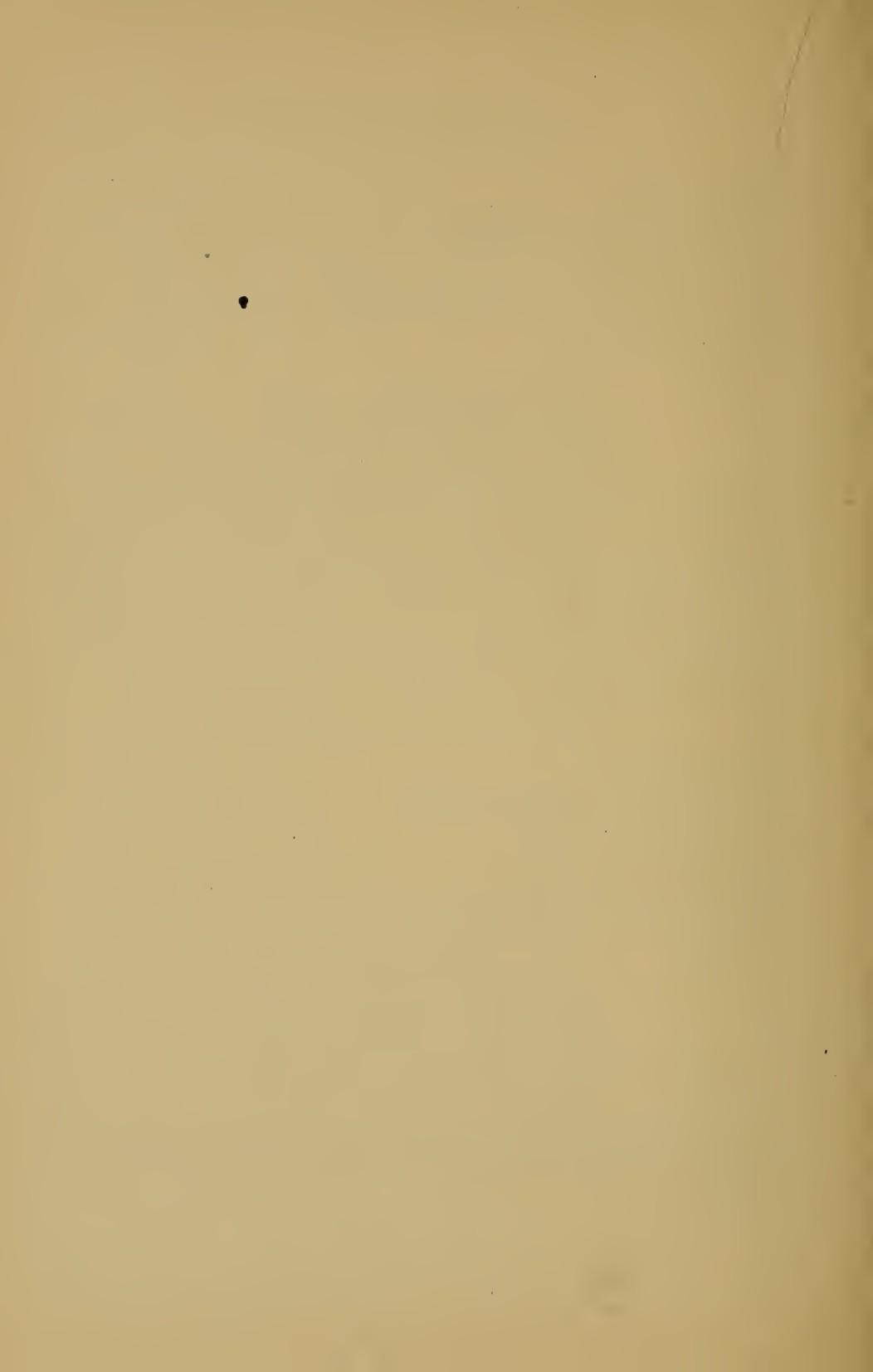
Demetrius. O Helen! Goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
 Beauty and virtue are forever thine.

Can this be Demetrius
Who with love proclaims her thus?
He who just a wink ago
In the woods abused her so!
Demetrius, Lysander too,
Take to their knees and wildly woo.

Helena. O spite! O hell! I see you both are bent
 To set against me for your merriment.
 A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
 To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes.

Hermia. Lysander!

At this crucial moment, in rushes Hermia, and straightway flies into the unwilling arms of her Lysander,—her Lysander now no more.



Hermia. Lysander, found!
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

Oh, what an answer Hermia hears
To break her heart and augment Helen's tears.

Lysander. The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so.
Hermia. You speak not as you think. It cannot be.
Helena. Injurious Hermia! Most ungrateful maid!
Have you conspired, are you with these arrayed,
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
Hermia. I scorn you not. It seems that you scorn me.
Helena. Have you not set Lysander as in scorn,
To follow me, and praise my eyes and face?
And made you other love, Demetrius,
To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,
Precious, celestial?
Demetrius. Helena, I love thee; by my life, 'tis true!
Lysander. I say I love thee more than he can do.
Demetrius. If thou say so, withdraw and prove it too.
Lysander. Quick, come,—

With a shriek, Hermia is about Lysander's neck.

Lysander. Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! Let loose!
Hermia. Why are you grown so rude? What change is this?

Meantime Lysander would Demetrius fight
But Hermia's arms embracing, hold him tight.
Oh hear him swear he hates her very sight!

Hate me? Wherfore? oh me, what news my love?
Lysander. Ay, by my life, be certain 'tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helen best.

'Tis said, and swift as fire burns,
Each girl upon the other turns.

Hermia. O me!

You thief of love! What, have you come by night,
And stolen my love's heart from him?

Helena. Fine, i'faith.

Have you no modesty, no maid'en shame?
You counterfeit, you puppet you.

Hermia. 'Puppet'! that way goes the game,

Now I perceive that she hath made compare
Between our statures; she hath urged her height,
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevailed with him.—
And are you grown so high in his esteem,
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I? Thou painted May-pole, speak!
I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes!

(*Confusion*)

Helena. Let her not hurt me!

Hermia. "Lower!" hark, what then!

See Helena, bulwarked by the men,
Come forth a step,
And then run back again.

Helena. Good Hermia!

To Athens will I bear my folly back,
And anger you no further. Let me go.

Hermia. Who is't that hinders you?

Helena. A foolish heart that I leave here behind.

Hermia. What, with Lysander?

Helena. With Demetrius!

Back to the gentlemen she flies,
Each to protect her, with the other vies.

Demetrius. Lysander! now she holds you not.

Come forth, and fight!

Lysander. To Helena my sword shall prove my right.

In a twinkling, chafing their weapons, the men are plunged in the wood.

Hermia. You! mistress! All this coil is long of you.

Up Helena gathers her petticoats, and with preposterous strides, escapes, Hermia full tilt after her. So confusion foots it all ways at once through the forest. Oberon beats Puck, and sets him the task to rescue the lovers from their bewitchment. Lysander yields first to the elf's magic.

Lysander. Here will I rest till dawn's grey light,
Then find Demetrius and avenge this spite.

He sleeps. Comes Demetrius staggering through the dark. Breathing vengeance against his foe, he lays him down to rest, his head almost pillow'd on Lysander's arm, and he sleeps too. Now for a little while all is still.

Puck on the mushroom is working his will.

Hermia comes with weariful sighs,

Down she crumples and closes her eyes.

Puck's laughing magic keeps working until

Helen by Hermia fast asleep lies.

Soon comes a blessing to undo the spell,

And when they awaken, all will be well!

Meanwhile, the friendly shadows brood upon them, and quiet enfolds the place.

Now Oberon seeks his Queen. A guiding moonbeam leads him. In its radiance, behold Titania, wreathing roses about her Mon-ster's head, the while her fairies ransack the kingdom in his service.

Who but Oberon works a spell,
There in the shadowy green;
Who but Oberon loves her well,
The sweet, tempestuous queen.
A stupefaction falls upon the Ass-top Bottom. His cavern-jaws
spread in a great yawn.

Bottom. I pray you, let none of your people stir me:
I have an exposition of sleep come upon me.

Titania. Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.
Fairies, begone!

Away they flutter. Her Monster composes himself to sleep,
while Titania soothes him with lullaby,—

Titania. O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee!

Now magic wins her, too, her bright head droops against his hairy
great ear.

She sleeps. Oberon brushes her eyes with the Flower of Cure.

Oberon. Be as thou wast wont to be;
See as thou wast wont to see;
Now, Titania, wake, sweet Queen!

She wakes, and flies his arms between,
For the bright flower's wholesome dew
Lifts spell of magic, and of anger too!

Titania. My Oberon!
What visions have I seen!
Methought I was enamoured of an Ass!

Oberon. There lies your love, sweet Queen!

Titania. Alas! Alas!

Hark to her cry of sweet dismay.
From out the wood comes tumbling every fay,
And every little elf is here,
To save Titania with his prickle spear!

Deep in love's arm she seeks to hide
From fearful sight she can so ill abide.
Now Puck takes off the ass's head,
Titania is comforted,
And all a fairy roundel tread.

They bless the sleeping lovers, and they tumble Bottom out
of sight into the hawthorn brake, and he never misses a snore.

Sudden the lark shrills warning.
Like wreathes of rainbow mist
The Fairies gather, swirl and twist
With tinkling laughter.
And as the world turns towards the light,
Their little dancing fairy feet
Slip down the shadows with the night.
So, following after
Their silv'ry guide, the moon,
Around the orb they'll run,
And come again right soon
To dance in Athens solemnly,
When Theseus shall wedded be.
So,—as were a candle flame out-blown—they are gone. And it's
deep of dark before dawn.

Intermission

(*A blare of horns*)

Horns echo. Night is shattered and gone. “The Eastern gate,
opening all fiery red with blessed beams, turns all to gold.”

Day comes.

The place choruses with lusty shouts, baying of hounds, and good
noise of human laughter. Theseus and Hippolyta with the Court
all in hunting garb, flash like the sun's messengers on the high
ground above our fairy place. Down to the soft green they
come, bringing the day.

Hippolyta. I was with Hercules and Cadmas once,
When in a wood of Crete, they bayed the bear
With hounds of Sparta:
The skies, the mountains, every region near
Seemed all one mutual cry. I never heard
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

Theseus. My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
And matched in mouth like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tunable
Was never cheered with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly:
Judge, when you hear.
Go, one of you, find out the forester!
My love shall hear the music of my hounds.—
Uncouple in the Western valley! let them go!—
We will, fair Queen, up to the mountain top,
And mark the musical confusion.

But before this happens, Egeus comes upon the maidens, fast,
fast asleep, dark and fair head, each against each, and the men
pillowed together nearby!

How the youngsters spring to dazed waking!—The girls stammer
innocent confusions. The men make sturdy claim, each to his
love, and behold! All magic is cured, and all unkindness, and
all false love is gone.

Demetrius turns now his true heart again to Helena.

Demetrius. My good lord,
By some power it is, my love to Hermia,
Melted as doth the snow, seems to me now,
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
Is only Helena.—To Helena, my lord,
Was I betrothed ere Hermia I saw,
And will forever more be true now to her law!

Egeus. Enough, enough, my lord!
I beg the law upon his head!

Theseus. Egeus, I will overbear your will,
For in the temple, by and by, with us,
These couples shall eternally be knit.
And, for the morning now is something worn,
Our purposed hunting shall be set aside.
Away, with us, to Athens! Three and three,
We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.

Out and away sweeps the Court. The youngsters stare, amazed, happy, breathless,—

Demetrius. Yet we sleep, we dream.—Do not you think
The Duke was here, and bid us follow him?

Hermia. Yes, and my father.

Helena. And Hippolyta.

Lysander. And he did bid us follow to the temple.

Demetrius. Why then, we are awake. Let's follow him;
And by the way, let us recount our dreams.

Away the lovers haste, light-foot and happy-heart, towards Athens. Their gay clamor echoes back and fills the place,— ripples more softly,—is still. All is golden, warm silence. No.

A snore!

A prodigious, gurgling, delectable snore, lusty harbinger of propitious waking.

Out of the hawthorn brake rolls Bottom. The snore becomes an ecstasy,—halts at top notch,—and explodes into speech.

Bottom. When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer:—
my next is, “ Most fair Pyramus.”

(*He yawns*)

What a yawn! and what a stretch! It lifts him up-seated. His fists prod the air, his legs outpush as he were swimming. His

head-top swings away from his chin like to a cellar door set wide. A final delicious tension, a convulsion of recovery, and Bottom is himself once more, wide awake. His wits spring to his service,— So! dropped asleep, eh, waiting for his cue—

Bottom. Peter Quince! Flute! Snout! Starveling!
God's my life! stolen hence, and left me asleep.

Even as he scrambles towards pursuit he stiffens stock still.

Bottom. I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream,—
Man is but an Ass if he go about to expound this
dream.

Something about that word "Ass" opens a vista of dread fancy. He fumbles towards his pate, his eyes cock apprehension. Ears,— are they there!

Bottom. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, and methought I had,—man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream, and I will sing it in the end of the play, before the Duke: peradventure, to make it more gracious, I shall sing it at Thisbe's death.

That he may the sooner be at Athens, and about these triumphs, he starts at a sturdy jog trot.

See yourself again in Athens, at the foot of those wide steps up-leading to the Palace.

All day long the wretched remnant of the Pyramus and Thisbe Company has hung about the place. Now one rushes off to seek news, or another gives up and pretends to leave, but mostly they hang dismally together here. Poor Quince! his the heaviest burden. Gone all his hope of glory! Gone his chance at a priz

in competition before the Duke, his application is all made,—and should Philostrate summon him;—What to do!

Quince. Have you sent to Bottom's house? Is he come home yet?

Starveling. He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he is transported.

Flute. If he come not, then the play goes not forward, doth it?

Quince. It is not possible: You have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus, but he.

Flute. No; he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens.

Snout. And he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

Flute. You must say “paragon”: a paramour is, God bless us, a thing of naught!

A wail lifts, further down the street, and in stumbles Snug, with the latest sad news.

Snug. Masters, the Duke is coming from the temple, and the Lords and Ladies too that saw them married. If our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men.

Flute. O, sweet bully Bottom! an the Duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged. Six-pence a day in Pyramus, or nothing.

Darkest it is ever before dawn. Even now, who comes! Bottom! O, marvel! Bottom! bully Bottom!

Bottom. Where are these lads? where are these hearts?

All. Bottom! O most courageous day! O most happy hour!

Sweet Bottom! Bless thee, Bottom!

Their welcomes tumble! How they fall upon him! How they stamp the pave, and slap their thighs, how, failing to reach him, they clasp each other! Hardly can he push in an edgewise word,—the great Bottom, who thinks of everything! Bottom who went straight to Philostrate the minute he arrived.

Bottom. Masters, I am to disclose wonders; but ask me not what. All that I will tell you is, get your apparel together. Meet presently at the Palace; every man look o'er his part; for the short and the long is, our play is preferred.

No more words: away! away!

So! hooray, and good luck to them, may they win the Duke's favor!

(*The End*)

Simple folk may wed in cloistered peace, but Royalty must make a pageant time of marriage! These many hours since the temple ceremony, when the royal two were wed, and our dear lovers also, Athens has acclaimed the royal pair; they, setting aside their own soul's, will for peace and sweet communion, bring royal graciousness to royal duty, and do their part. And in all the festival, our dear youngsters take their share.

Now draws evening near. The streets we lately saw all gold with day, grow dark. Guards come out upon the upper terraces of the palace, where orange curtains hang close against the marble pillars, and the green tops of the Duke's garden swing against the glooming sapphire sky—the wonderful garden that reaches from the deeps of the fairies' forest.

The guards spread the orange curtains from pillar to pillar and so shut out Court doings from the street. Within the Palace is feasting and preparation for the evening's pageantry. Throughout Athens is feasting too, and preparation. And O! but our Pyramus and Thisbe folk are all a'rush, for think! their play is chosen by

Philostrate! Mayhap the Duke may call for it! and what confusion befell its rehearsal, we know.

Now citizens begin to gather. Court guards set fresh flaring torches against the pillars and along the street. Chorusing of happy voices fills the place as the citizens crowd on. Now the time is come! The great curtains are swept back. The people shout. The bronze doors are thrown wide. It is as were a shower of nasturtium-bloom tossed out over the steps.

Now come the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Court. How the people greet them! About the terraces, the Great Folk find seating.

Now come Hermia and Lysander; Demetrius and Helena; and good old Egeus, as happy as were he never otherwise.

The young people shine in bridal array. They wait either side the golden throne seat.

Up lifts welcome from every throat.

To the splendid measures of a wedding march come Theseus and Hippolyta.

(*Now Mendelssohn's music should tell the story, and show these splendors as he saw them*)

From the high throne speaks Theseus:

Theseus. Joy, gentle friends! joy and fresh days of love
Accompany your hearts!
Where is our manager of mirth?
What revels are in hand? Speak, Philostrate.
What masque? what music? How shall we
beguile
The heavy time, if not with some delight?
Is there no play?

Now is the fatal moment!

Philostrate. A play there is, my lord.
And Philostrate reads from the scroll:

Philostrate. A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus,
And his love Thisbe, very tragical mirth,
Merry and tragical; tedious and brief!

Theseus. What are they that do play it?

Philostrate. So be pleased, great lord,
Hard-handed men, that work in Athens here,
Which never laboured in their minds till now,
With this same play against your nuptial.

Theseus. And we will hear it.

For never anything can be amiss.

When simpleness and duty tender it.

Go, bring them in.

And in they come! Could you but see them! Flute, in petticoats, and all rose-crowned and yellow-wigged for Thisbe. Pyramus a'clank in armor. Starveling with lime and rough-cast doth present Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder; up he holds his hand with fingers chinked for them to speak through. How beautifully Snout explains himself:

Snout. All that I have to say is, to tell you, that the lantern is the moon; I, the man in the moon; this thorn-bush is my thorn-bush, and this dog my dog.

And O, this grisly beast . . .

(*The lion roars and then speaks in tiny voice*)

Snug. You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.

(*He roars*)

Then know that I, one Snug the Joiner be;
No lion fell, as plainly you can see.
For, if I should as lion come in strife
Into this place, 'twere pity of my life.

Theseus. A very gentle beast, and of good conscious.

Dear Quince! his jerkin heaves up and down with his heart-beats! And how they all applaud seeing his scroll of manuscript, and knowing him to be stage manager. In a line they stand and bow and bow. Then comes the play. And how they play! Were hearts of granite made, still must they melt at such simplicity and fervor. That love scene! Wall stiffly propped.

Pyramus. Oh, kiss me through the hole of this vile Wall.

Thisbe. I kiss the Wall's hole, not your lips at all.

Pyramus. Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?

Thisbe. Tide life tide death, I come without delay.

And when Thisbe comes galloping to Ninus' tomb, and Snout waves the moon to and fro! and the lion roars! (*roar*) and Thisbe shrieks (*shriek*) and runs! (*Applause*).

Demetrius. Well roared, Lion!

Theseus. Well run, Thisbe!

Hippolyta. Well shone, Moon. Truly, the Moon shines with a good grace.

And as she fled, her mantle she did fall, which lion vile, with bloody mouth did mouse. (*The lion mouses.*) Now Pyramus comes clanking beneath the wildly waving Moon. He sees the cloak!

(*Pyramus howls*)

Pyramus. Thy mantle good,
What, stained with blood!
Approach, ye Furies fell!

Hippolyta. Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man!

Pyramus. Come tears, confound!

Out sword, and wound!

Quail, crush, conclude and quell!!!

Thus die I, thus, thus, thus!

Now am I dead;

Now am I fled;

My soul is in the sky:

Tongue, lose thy light!

Moon, take thy flight!

Away gallops the Moon.

(*Footsteps galloping*)

Pyramus. Now die, die, die, die, die!

And *plunk!* he stiffens out. (*Applause.*) So beautifully he does it, so hearty the applause, that he gets up and does it all over again.

But all these excellences are forgotten at the first shriek of Thisbe.

(*Shriek*)

Thisbe. O speak, my love!

What, dead, my love?

O, Pyramus, arise!

Speak, speak! Quite dumb?

Dead, dead? O come!

Alas, no word!

Out, trusty sword;

My breast inbrye:

And farewell friends.—

Thus Thisbe ends:—

Adieu, adieu, adieu!

Demetrius. A Mote will turn the balance, which or Pyramus or Thisbe, is the better; he for a man, Good warrant us; she for a woman, God bless us.

In a trice all are on their feet bowing and saluting. Upon each player Philostrate bestows a purse of gold. The prize is won! Quince all out of breath, stammers joyfully.

Quince. Will 't please you, sir, to hear us do a burgomask dance?

Theseus. Marry, your play needs no excuse. It would be a fine tragedy, and so it is truly, and very notably discharged. But come, your burgomask!

(*Music, shouting, stamp of dancing. The bell. All stop! Bell tolls twelve*)

Theseus. The iron tongue of midnight hath tolled twelve. Good players all,—begone!

What full hearts they take away with them!

Gentles, good night!

The crowd melts from the street, and now he speaks to the Court about him.

Sweet friends,—to rest!

His glance turns to our dear young folk.

Lovers, to bed. 'Tis almost fairy time.

A moment more, and the great bronze doors close on the royal two, and all are gone. Guards take down the torches and put out their blaze. The stars shine gold in the black sky among the tree-tops! The great curtains are drawn close.

Silence!

Sh!

(*A tinkle of fairy music*)

A mist swirls scarf-like across the curtains, and back they swing again.

(*Puck's long, low laugh croons*)

Like a flicker of flame in the dark, up from the garden below, the garden that finds its way back and back to the forest. Puck springs to the top of the terrace.

Up from the garden, mist on mist,

Swarm the Fairies to this tryst.

By the doors and windows, too,

All the Palace through and through

Seek they now

With spell and vow,

Thro' cracks and crevices they sift,

In and out they softly drift,

Blessing they leave in chamber and hall;

They bless each bed and the sleepers all,

That each and each, the couples three

Shall ever true and loving be.

Now on the terrace they are come

Their stately dance to do.

Stars twinkle in the dusky sky

And here they twinkle too;

In and out the pillars tall

Up, and down, and round and through,

Soft and more soft the music flows,

Dark and more dark the dancing goes.

Which is shadow, which is true!

Sh. They are gone . . . the curtains close,—

Darkness shrouds . . .

and stillness . . .

All is done.

THE END

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